

“Aim To Do Good”

A brief introductory explanation of the Hadeeth of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ):

“Aim to do good and do what you can. Do your duties early in the day or in the afternoon, or at night, and be moderate, and you will succeed.”

[Saheeh al Bukhari, 6463 and Saheeh Muslim, 2818]

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All praise is due to Allaah. We praise Him and seek His aid and forgiveness. We seek refuge in Allaah from the evil of our own selves and from the evil of our actions. Whomsoever Allaah guides, none can send astray and whoever Allaah sends astray, none can guide.

I bear witness that there is no deity worthy of worship except Allaah alone, who has no partner. And I bear witness that Muhammad (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) is His slave and His Messenger. May Allaah send peace and blessings upon him, his family and his Companions until the Last Day.



The Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: **“Aim to do good and do what you can. Do your duties early in the day or in the afternoon, or at night, and be moderate, and you will succeed.”**

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This short and simple hadeeth exemplifies the type of clarity with which the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) spoke. His eloquence and brevity in speech is unparalleled with precision and wealth of meaning. It carries a depth that reflects the words of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) when he said, “... I have been given words which are concise but comprehensive in meaning...” [Saheeh Muslim, 1062]

To succeed in something means to be successful. Contrary to popular culture, success is not measured by ephemeral and temporary values like wealth or status, neither is it gained by scoring top grades in examinations or having a good job. Success is defined by Allaah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) and whatever the Qur'an and the Sunnah explain to be success is what every Muslim should try his utmost to attain. The real and true success of a Muslim is to attain Allaah's Mercy and Forgiveness, thereby being granted paradise. This is the greatest success of all; while the greatest of all failures is the opposite of this.

Allaah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) explains what success is in many places of the noble Qur'an, some within a general context and some in a specific context. For example He says: **Indeed whosoever purifies himself shall achieve success. (A'laa: 14)** – The subject of tazkiyah (purification) in Islam is vast and whosoever is able to achieve this wholesome purification will succeed. What other success can be attained through purification of the self if not paradise?

In another Surah, Allaah (سُبْحَانَهُ وَتَعَالَى) describes the greatest of all success when He says: **And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. (Aal-Imraan: 185)**

The ephemeral successes are finite and last for a short period of time in this world. The Qur'an and Sunnah provide the means for real success; a success that brings an infinite reward in the hereafter for all eternity and a success which every Muslim seeks to achieve through hard work. If such a success can not be attained, then who is it that can bear the heat and the punishment of the fire of hell?

The success of paradise is something that is not gotten easily nor is it achieved with mere words that entail no action. Islam wholly signifies faith in the heart, affirmation of the tongue and action of the limbs and in many ayaat of the Qur'an, faith and righteous action is inseparable because they perfect each other. Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **And those who believe in Allaah and work righteousness, He will admit to Gardens beneath which Rivers flow. (Talaaq: 11)**

Principally, faith is rooted in the heart while the righteous actions are the fruit it provides. When the roots are healthy, the fruit thereof will be sweet. It is possible that faithless people perform righteous actions from time to time and people with faith perform evil actions, but they both remain futile exercises. For Muslims, faith by its very nature demands righteous action which in turn provides the sense of responsibility. Whatever results in getting closer to paradise is itself a path to the ultimate success. In the focal hadeeth above, the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) gave glad tidings of success and a number of criteria have been provided that brings about success. We know that to succeed in goodness, results in the fulfilment of Allaah's promise of rewards.

The guarantee of success which the focal hadeeth speaks of lies in the fulfilment of conditions contained within it. We will review its prerequisites and explain why they are so lofty and weighty that the one who fulfils them is promised to succeed. For a basic analysis, the focal hadeeth can be divided in the following proceeding order:

1. Aim to do good

Nothing is more precious to a Muslim than time. The Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to advise Muslims to take the initiative in doing good deeds before any obstacles arose, as he said: "Lose no time to do good deeds before you are caught up by one of seven calamities awaiting you: a starvation which may impair your wisdom; a prosperity which may mislead you; an ailment which may damage your health; an old age which may harm your senses; a sudden death; the Dajjal (arrival of the false messiah); or the Last Day, which is indeed the hardest and most bitter." [Sunan Tirmidhi, al-Baihaqi]

Imagine how much time is wasted everyday by frivolous activities like watching television, playing games, indulging in useless talk, etc? How often are we sitting waiting for an appointment, standing in queue at the store or bank, or stuck in traffic? Could this time not be better spent in dhikr (remembrance of Allaah), earning huge rewards and expiating our minor sins? Many these adhkar (pl.) take less than a minute to utter. Ibn Qayyim mentioned from amongst the ten things that bring about the love of Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) is, 'Remembering Allaah in every situation with one's time, heart and deeds'.

The Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: " "There are two blessings which many people do not make the most of and thus lose out: good health and free time (for doing good)." [Saheeh al-Bukhari 4612]

He (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) also advised on making the most of five things before five things occurred and amongst them he said: "...free time before becoming busy..." [Saheeh al-Jaami', no. 107]

If time is so important, then the Muslim should not have any free time, for he should be going from one act of worship and obedience to another. If he cannot spend all his time going from one act of obedience and worship to another then, he may spend some of his time in permissible pursuits, in which he should ensure that his intention is correct, so that he may earn reward thereby, as Mu'aadh (may Allaah be pleased with him) said: "I get up and I sleep, and I hope for the same when I sleep as I hope for when I get up." Narrated by al-Bukhaari, 6923; Muslim, 1854.

Those who do not understand the value of time, end up neglecting this great blessing. Time becomes regarded as destructive and an enemy that needs to be killed, but they do not realise that they are killing themselves. We must

therefore make the best use of time and ensure to benefit from time by racing to do good deeds, learning from the passage of time, seeking the superior times of the day to increase our good deeds, planning and organising time, fulfilment of time commitments, utilising leisure time and having the necessary awareness of time wasters. Muslims must constantly be occupied with preserving their speech and actions for only that which is good and recommended. Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **O you who believe! Fear Allaah, and keep your duty to Him. And let every person look to what he has sent forth for the morrow. (Hashr: 18)**

In the focal hadeeth, the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Aim to do good..." This 'good' is not something that can be expressed nor explained outside the fold of Islam because it is Islam itself that promotes the goodness which the hadeeth is speaking of. It is within the dictates of Islam that real goodness can be identified and acted upon, and as Muslims, we must understand the main reason of our righteous actions. Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says in the Noble Qur'an: **Verily, the good deeds remove the evil deeds... (Hud: 114)**

Here we have a clear and fundamental reason why a Muslim must always aim to do good. Further to this ayah, the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) advised his dear companion Mu'aadh ibn Jabal (رضي الله عنه), when he sent him to Yemen, "O Mu'aadh, fear Allaah wherever you are, and follow up a bad deed with a good deed, and it will wipe it out, and treat people in a kind manner." [Sunan Tirmidhi, classed Saheeh]

Again Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **Except those who repent and believe and work righteous deeds, for them Allaah will change their evil deeds to good deeds, and Allaah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.** (Furqaan: 70)

This ayah speaks about Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) changing the evil deeds of Muslims into good deeds for those who repent and believe and work righteous deeds. The first and foremost of repentance which the ayah signifies is the repentance from shirk (associating partners with Allaah) as ayah 68 of Surah al Furqaan states. We therefore clearly understand that aiming to do good primarily involves rejecting shirk in all its forms and embracing tawheed (unique oneness of Allaah) in all its forms. A Muslims with a sound belief and a righteous act that rejects shirk, will remove himself from Allaah's threat of not being forgiven as He (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **Verily! Allâh forgives not (the sin of) setting up partners in worship with Him... (Nisaa': 116)**

Repentance is one of the best and indeed from the loftiest of deeds; this is because every good deed wipes out the bad deed. With the combination of repentance and belief, Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) promises to change the bad deeds into good deeds; Ibn Katheer explained this ayah thus: "...those evil deeds that have passed are turned into good deeds by way of the true and sincere repentance itself. This is because every time that person remembers what he had done, he regrets it, feels remorse, and seeks Allaah's forgiveness. In this way, the sin becomes an act of obedience; on the Day of Judgment, even if he finds those sins recorded against him, they do him no harm and are turned into good deeds on the page of his account. This is what is established by the Sunnah and by the statements related to us from the Pious Predecessors."

Like faith and righteous action, repentance and righteous actions are inseparable; this is because repentance requires a follow-up of good actions to show the sincerity of the repentance, this is why Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **And whosoever repents and does righteous good deeds, then verily, he repents towards Allâh with true repentance.** (Furqaan: 71)

The focal hadeeth gives a general exhortation to do good; and we know that every type of goodness has been defined by Islam. When a Muslim aims to do good, he understands what good is because it has been sanctioned by Islam. He also knows what the opposite of good is because it has been condemned and prohibited by Islam. The good and bad in Islam are derived from the lawful and the prohibited in Islam and it is Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) alone who has set forth rules of what these are.

A good thing generally is not prohibited by Islam and a bad thing made lawful; furthermore the Messenger ﷺ said: "That which is lawful is clear and that which is unlawful is clear..." [Saheeh al Bukhari and Saheeh Muslim]

Lawful and unlawful matters in Islam are akin to good and bad matters; therefore the aim to do good must also include the aim to avoid and prevent the bad and evil. Further from amongst the evil matters is the kaba'ir (major sins) which Islam has specifically mentioned. Allaah ﷺ mentions: **Those who avoid great sins... (Najm: 32)**

Good deeds are also multiplied, and Allaah ﷺ says: **Whoever brings a good deed shall have ten times the like thereof to his credit**, and whoever brings an evil deed shall have only the recompense of the like thereof, and they will not be wronged. (An'aam: 160)

Good deed here is described as those which primarily promote tawheed and which are done in obedience to Allaah and His Messenger ﷺ. Evil deeds likewise are those that promote shirk and disbelief, hypocrisy, and deeds which are done in disobedience to Allaah and His Messenger ﷺ. Clearly we need to understand the significance of the multiplication of good as this can only be realised through obedience to Allaah and His Messenger ﷺ. Allaah ﷺ also says: **O you who believe! Obey Allaah, and obey the messenger, and render not vain your deeds. (Muhammad: 33)**

Making vain our deeds can only occur when we do not obey Allaah and His Messenger ﷺ. It is essential by necessity that good deeds are sanctioned by the Qur'an and Sunnah. Wasting time or indulging in useless pursuits are not from the teachings of the Qur'an or Sunnah, therefore Muslims should be weary that their deeds are not wasted because they are abusing time and not using it to for right reasons or to its full potential.

He ﷺ also says: **If you avoid the great sins which you are forbidden to do, We shall remit from you your (small) sins, and admit you to a Noble Entrance (i.e. Paradise). (Nisaa': 31)**

Even for those matters that are doubtful, Islam encourages Muslims to avoid so that we do not fall into the unlawful unknowingly. In the same hadeeth which has been cited, the Messenger ﷺ continued: "...Between the two (i.e. lawful and unlawful matters) are doubtful matters that few people have knowledge about. Whoever avoids these doubtful matters absolves himself of blame with respect to his religion and his honour. Whoever falls into doubtful things will fall into what is unlawful, just like the shepherd who grazes his flock too close to a private pasture is liable to have some of his flock stray into it. Every king has a private pasture, and Allaah's private pasture is what he has prohibited..."

The Messenger ﷺ said: "Leave that which makes you doubt for that which does not make you doubt." [Sunan Tirmidhi and Nasaa'i]. Again we find that goodness cannot be found in something that is doubtful, therefore leaving the doubtful for the certain becomes a means by which the good can be accomplished. It must also be critically borne in mind that for any act of worship to be accepted in Islam, it must be in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger ﷺ and the intention must also be sincerely for the sake of Allaah ﷺ.

We can understand that aiming to do good is specific as well as general. Specific in promoting tawheed and rejecting shirk; general in promoting virtue and preventing vice. We also understand a fundamental point where a righteous action performed is a means for the removal of a bad action. Islam is generally about rights and limits; the rights of Allaah ﷺ upon His creation and the rights of the creation upon their Creator. The limits are what Allaah has allowed and prohibited for mankind, therefore, we understand that aiming to do good is in essence aiming to do everything that Allaah ﷺ has enjoined, ordained and encouraged through the comprehensive Shari'ah of Islam.

2. Do what you can

Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) has created mankind with its individual strengths, weaknesses and capabilities. Despite these differences, each and every one is able to perform the best he can with the ability that he has. In general however, Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) has given every Muslim the capacity to fulfil those things that are obligated upon them. The fulfilment of the five pillars of Islam for example is mandatory; yet there are certain exceptions for those who are unable to fulfil one or some of them, in part or in whole.

The one who is poor or one who is in ill health is exempt from performing the hajj, the one who is poor is not obliged to pay zakah and rather he becomes a recipient of it. The one who is in perpetual ill health or relies heavily on medication is not obliged to fast during the month of Ramadan, nor is the pregnant woman who has been medically advised due to a fear for the unborn child. The menstruating woman is not obliged to pray salah until her period ends; the Muslim traveller is given concessions to shorten his salah and both, the traveller and the non-traveller are permitted to combine salah prayer if it is too difficult to perform the second prayer on time. Although expiations apply in most cases, they are again subject to the physical and monetary and other means which one possesses.

Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **Allaah does not burden any human being with more than he can bear. (Baqarah: 286)** - In Islamic jurisprudence, there are numerous examples of the mercy and the flexibility that Islam extends to the Muslims who are in extreme and unique situations with regards to the fulfilment of their religious obligations and duties. However, what each Muslim must sincerely strive to do, is to do as much good as possible and not find excuses where the exceptions and concessions do not apply. Furthermore, they must continuously strive to do what they can and remain consistent and constant within it. The Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was asked: "Which deed is most beloved to Allaah?" He replied, "The one that is continuous, even if it is little." [Saheeh al-Bukhari (Fath al-Bari 11:194)]

We are responsible for what we say and do, we should always strive to improve ourselves and constantly remind ourselves that we can do better. At the same time, we must not overburden ourselves and remember the crucial advice of the Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) when he said: "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extreme, but try to be near to perfection..." [Saheeh al-Bukhari]

Doing what we can is a general term and can also be understood by the words of Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى): **Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good (Islam), enjoining the good and forbidding the evil. And it is they who are the successful. (Aal-Imraan: 104)**

By learning and practising and teaching Islam, we can hope to enjoin the good and forbid the evil and partake in some of the success which Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) has promised in this ayah. We should do what we can; as much as we can and keep consistent in them.

3. Do your duties early in the day

Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **And remember your Lord by your tongue and within yourself, humbly and with fear without loudness in words in the mornings, and in the afternoons and be not of those who are neglectful. (Al-'raaf: 205)**

He (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) also says: ... and glorify the praises of your Lord before the rising of the sun, and before its setting, and during some of the hours of the night, and at the sides of the... (TaaHaa: 130)

Ibn Qayyim mentions that dhikr includes, "any and every particular moment when you are thinking, saying or doing things which Allah likes". It is a guarantee from Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) that He will give success to those who remember Him regularly, as He says: ...and remember Allah frequently that you may prosper. (Jumu`ah: 10)

Although dhikr is a comprehensive aspect of Islam that encompasses the entire life of a Muslim, we must pay special attention to those narrations of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) that speak about specific supplications and invocations that are to be said at specific times of the day. We also need to seek refuge in Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) from what He has asked us to seek refuge from. He (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: Say: "I seek refuge with (Allaah) the Lord of the daybreak. From the evil of what He has created..." (Falaq: 1-2)

Allaah is the Lord of day and night and he tests and tries His creation with trials to see which of them are best in deeds. We must aim to do good at every stage of the day; early in the day, the first and foremost of duties for all Muslims are those what are fard (obligated upon us). Duties done early in the morning would consist primarily of Fajr salah and prior to that tahajjud prayer and reading of the Qur'an and other forms of ibadah and dhikr that a Muslim is accustomed to. Adhkar (plural of dhikr refers to the remembrance of Allaah) of the morning and evening and at specific times are indeed well established in Islam. Muslims must become accustomed to memorising and using them at all times. Dhikr in general must remain with us during the course of each day as the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) advised: "Keep your tongue moist with the remembrance of Allaah." [Sunan Tirmidhi, 9/314] – In regards to dhikr, Ibn Taymiyyah remarked: "Remembrance of Allaah is to the heart what water is to fish. What happens to a fish when it is taken out of water?"

There are many other aspects of religious duties that one can do and there is nothing that should be seen as beyond our ability. The Messenger of Allaah (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) once asked his companions, "Which of you is fasting today?" Abu Bakr said, "I am." He asked, "Which of you has visited a sick person today?" Abu Bakr said, "I have." Then he asked, "Who has attended a funeral today?" Abu Bakr said, "I have." He asked, "Who has fed a poor person today?" Abu Bakr said, "I have." [Saheeh al-Bukhari (see: Al-Adab al-Mufrad)] - Marwan, the transmitter of the hadeeth said, "I heard that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) say, "These qualities are not brought together in one man on a single day but that he will enter the Garden."

'Umar (رضي الله عنه) was present when Allaah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) asked the above questions and he was always competing with Abu Bakr in goodness. He remarked his astonishment that Abu Bakr (رضي الله عنه) managed to perform all these duties despite the fact that it was early in the morning at the time of Fajr!

The advice to do our duties early in the day can also be understood in light of our social activities; morning is a time when most of us get occupied with our work etc. and weekly routines comes into play. None of this however should hinder our religious standing as both the duties complement each other; going to work can become a form of ibadah when it is performed by halal means and provides sustenance for one's family. Therefore, by doing our duties in the morning, we are placing our trust in Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) which can never be detached from hard work and active striving. This trust becomes a firm platform upon which the rest of our day is built and progresses by the Will of Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى).

4. Do your duties in the afternoon

Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: ...and glorify the praises of your Lord in the *Ashi* (i.e. the time period after the midnoon till sunset) and in the *Ibkâr* (i.e. the time period from early morning or sunrise till before midnoon). (Ghaafir: 55)

Duties done early in the afternoon consist primarily of Dhuhr and 'Asr salah. Muslims must ensure that, like all the fard salah, they perform Dhuhr and "Asr salah on time and in congregation as much as possible. Narrations that speak about the rewards of performing salah on time are too numerous to mention here. Furthermore, this is also a time when most people are at work and involved in their business activities. The Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Seeking halal earning is fard after fard." [Bayhaqi] - Working to earn a halal living is itself a religious obligation after the primary obligations. Furthermore, they must ensure that their work and business interests are halal and no aspect of it should contain haram. The Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Allaah is Pure, and accepts only the pure." [Saheeh Muslim and Sunan Tirmidhi]

To earn a halal living may be a broad statement, but this is the basis for a society's economic life within Islam. Not every business idea or possible business enterprise is good for the society. And the decision regarding right and wrong here cannot be left to the so-called 'market forces'. Right and wrong in the economic life, as in all life, must be determined by the sources of Shari'ah at both individual and collective level.

At times that guidance may conflict with the prevailing practices. For example riba (interest), gambling, pornography, and liquor are from amongst the major sins, and no matter how attractive the financial rewards of engaging in those enterprises may seem to be, a Muslim must refrain from them. This is the economic struggle of a believer, and it is obvious why it should be carried out as a religious obligation.

Islam encourages Muslims to look after their physical and mental self all the time, through eating appropriate food and regular exercise to keeping the mind constantly occupied with useful matters like memorising the Qur'an and etc. It was a practise of some of the companions of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) that they took a short nap before the time of Dhuhr or between Dhuhr and 'Asr. This was usually done with the intention of performing tahajjud prayer in the middle of the night. Today, this nap is known as a siesta which is done after the midday meal and has become a tradition in some countries, particularly those with a warm climate. Modern facts have shown that a 10-20 minute siesta improves a person's productivity by over 30% and improves alertness by up to 100% and also reduces stress and the risk of heart disease by 34%.

The main point for the above example is simply to highlight that actions taken to achieve something good are in and of themselves, good. Muslims must undertake duties that are recommended and those which will enable them to reach the goodness. Those deeds that give the largest amount of reward must always be priorities as much as possible. As a relevant reminder, the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Allaah will prepare for him who goes to the masjid every morning and in the afternoon (for congregational salah) an honourable place in paradise..." [Saheeh al-Bukhari 1/631)

5. Do your duties at night

Duties done at night consist primarily of Maghrib and 'Ishaa salah. This is also the time when families gather together after a hard day at work and school etc. and partake in dinner. Muslims must always be thankful to Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) for his countless blessings and for providing the means to fulfill their needs. In this way, every act of a need for a Muslim is turned into an ibadah if the act is done sincerely for the sake of Allaah and done in accordance with the Sunnah of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ).

As part of a longer hadeeth, the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) was asked: "O Messenger of Allaah, when one of us fulfils his sexual desire will he have some reward for that?" He said: "Do you not see that were he to act upon it unlawfully he would be sinning? Likewise, if he acted upon it lawfully he will have a reward." [Saheeh Muslim]

Night time is considered a period of greater fitnah as the night brings out the *fah'Ishaah* (evil and lewdness etc) and Muslims must protect themselves against this and all other shameless acts. They must also remember the advice of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) when he said: "When you are in the evening, do not expect to see the morning, and when you are in the morning, do not expect to see the evening." [Saheeh al-Bukhari] – Such narrations will imbue taqwah of Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) and enable individuals to keep on the straight path of guidance without deviating towards destructive actions.

Again, we must become habitual in our remembrance (dhikr) of Allaah at all times with particular adhkar; as Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) narrated that the Prophet (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) used to say in the morning, "O Allah, by You we start the day and by You we end it, by You we live and by You we die and to You is the gathering." In the evening he would say. "O Allah, by You we end the day, by You we live and by You we die and to You is the gathering." [Sunan Abu Dawud and at-Tirmidhi]

The Muslims must become accustomed to learning and using these well established and rewarding adhkar at their proper times.

Furthermore, the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "There is not a Muslim that visits another in the morning except that 70,000 angels ask forgiveness for him until the night, and if he visits him at night then 70,000 angels ask forgiveness for him until the morning, and he will have earned a garden in paradise" [Sunan Tirmidhi] - There are many similar ahadeeth found in the Saheeh and other collections and it exhorts Muslims to visit each other and strengthen the ties of kinship and increase the bonds of brotherhood. Some duties should simply not be restricted to a particular time and day unless there is mutual agreement on that.

Abu Barza (رضي الله عنه) narrated that Allaah's Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) disliked to sleep before the 'Ishaah salah and to talk after it. [Saheeh al-Bukhari, book 10, no. 543] - After the 'Ishaah salah, there are many Muslims who decide to stay in the masjid and talk or decide to impose themselves on a fellow brother who may not necessarily want company. Each Muslim must have the wisdom to read the situation and act accordingly. It is also encouraged not to talk after 'Ishaah as it is a time of contemplation and dhikr as well a time to sleep so that getting up for tahajjud or Fajr salah becomes easier.

6. Be moderate

The Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) said: "Be moderate, and you will reach what you want." [Saheeh al-Bukhari] This is again a simple yet beautifully comprehensive statement of the Messenger (صَلَّى اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَسَلَّمَ) which exhorts Muslims to be moderate. In return for being moderate, Muslims will reach what they intend and set out to do. For example, Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **"And those, who, when they spend, are neither extravagant nor niggardly, but hold a middle (way) between those (extremes)." (Furqaan: 67)**

With many such ayaat, Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) lays a rule for moderation, where choosing the medium path between two extremes is not only recommended, but more rewarding. Muslims should use this principle to determine every act of worship and other good deeds they perform.

Islam is a middle path between the two points of laxness and extremism. Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) says: **"Thus have We made you a just nation, that you be witnesses over the mankind, and the Messenger be a witness over you..." (Baqarah: 143)**

Muslims are called '*Ummatan Wasatan*' and the commentators of the Qur'an explain the word "wasat" to mean 'justly balanced' or 'the best'. Allaah (سبحانه وَتَعَالَى) has made this nation a moderate one and guided Muslims to the middle path; a path that has no extremes or excesses or exaggerations.

It is the subsequent weak nature of mankind that leads to imbalance in his life; for Muslims, trying to keep this balance is crucial. The Prophet ﷺ said: "Everybody has his time of energy, and every time of energy is followed by a time of lethargy. But if a person tries to follow a moderate path, then I have hope for him, but if he becomes one who is pointed out (in the street), then do not think anything of him." [Tirmidhi, 2453; classed as Hasan by al-Albaani in Saheeh al-Tirmidhi, 1995]

"What is meant by "Everybody has his time of energy" is eagerness for a thing and the drive and energy to do good. Energy does not remain constant just as emaan (faith) does not remain constant, therefore the renewal and up-keeping of faith is synonymous to the energy required in order to achieve it. Tiredness, weakness and lack of motivation explain the next phrase of the hadeeth that states "every time of energy is followed by a time of lethargy". Over-exertion and enthusiasm or total laxness are the two extremes that Islam warns against; that is why the next part of this hadeeth states "But if a person tries to follow a moderate path" - The one who has energy does his deeds in moderation and avoids going to extremes when he is feeling energetic and avoids being negligent when he is feeling lethargic,

After speaking about the time energy and lethargy and promoting the path of moderation, the Messenger ﷺ says about this path and moderate approach "then I have hope for him" – He ﷺ has hope that such a person treading the path of moderation will be successful.

"But if he becomes one who is pointed out (in the street)" implies that if a Muslim strives hard and goes to extremes in doing good deeds so that he will become well known for them, then people point him out to one another and speak about his deeds. The Messenger ﷺ said about such a person "then do not think anything of him" – Here we understand that we should not assume he is righteous because of public perception of his showing off." [Adapted from Tuhfat al-Ahwadhi]

Let us ponder over this hadeeth, and relate it to your own situation and that of others and we will see a clear similarity. The hadeeth mentions the stages a man goes through; from incomparable eagerness and great focus and ambition, to sudden weakness and loss of focus, ambition and drive. When he reaches this stage, he must strive even harder to perform and remain steadfast in the obligatory duties and avoid sin and transgression.

Anas (رضي الله عنه) reported that: "Three men came to the houses of the wives of the Prophet ﷺ and asked how his (the Prophet's) worship was. When they were informed, they considered their own worship to be insignificant and said: 'Where are we in comparison to the Prophet ﷺ when Allaah has forgiven his past and future sins?' One of them said: 'As for me, I shall offer prayer all night long.' Another said: 'I shall observe fasting perpetually, never to break it.' Another said: 'I shall abstain from women and will never marry.' The Prophet ﷺ came to know about their oaths and he came to them and said: "Are you the people who said such things? I swear By Allaah that I fear Allaah more than you do, and I am most obedient and dutiful among you to Him, but still, I observe fasting (sometimes) and break it (sometimes); I perform (optional) prayer (at night sometimes) and sleep at night (sometimes); I also marry. So whoever turns away from my Sunnah (i.e., my way) is not from me." [Saheeh al-Bukhari and Muslim]

The Messenger ﷺ said: "Religion is very easy and whoever overburdens himself in his religion will not be able to continue in that way. So you should not be extreme, but try to be near to perfection..." [Saheeh al-Bukhari 1/8]

Furthermore, it was reported that the Messenger ﷺ was never offered two options except that he would choose the easiest of them as long as both were halal. He ﷺ also said: "Allaah did not send me to be harsh, or cause harm, but He sent me to teach and make things easy." [Saheeh Muslim, no. 707]

In Summary, please note that this brief illustration of the focal hadeeth is neither inclusive nor exhaustive in its depth of meaning or width of explanation. It is a mere attempt to encourage Muslims to take their faith seriously and start to live their lives according to Islam, without which there is no success. Muslims are duty-bound to display the best morals and manners through practising Islam. The Shari'ah and its sources of legislation are universal and comprehensive. Its fundamental pillars and principles are permanent, yet it is dynamic and flexible enough in its secondary and tertiary issues to suit all people and all places for all time.

To succeed in the deception of this mortal life is neither an achievement nor success. To succeed in the reality of the eternal life to come is from the greatest of success. **And whoever is removed away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise, he indeed is successful. (Aal-Imraan: 185)**

Everything good and correct in this text is from Allaah (سبحانه وتعالى) alone; and any errors and mistakes found herein are from myself and I seek refuge from them in the forgiveness of the Most High. I would encourage all readers to inform me if they find any part/s of the content that they know to be incorrect and I will rectify the shortcomings.

And only Allaah's Help is sought.

Disclaimer: The English translation of the meanings of the Qur'an is taken from 'The Noble Qur'an' by Dr. Muhammad Taqi-ud-Din Al-Hilali and Dr. Muhammad Muhsin Khan.

Please note that you can not and should not use non-Arabic translations of the Qur'an and the Hadeeth as a replacement or substitute for the original Arabic. Gross misunderstandings usually arise from lack of language skills as well as knowledge of history and context from amongst others.